

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 AGR-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

IO-10 /100 W

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R 051600Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2111

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

UNCLAS GEORGETOWN 0010

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB GY PINT

SUBJ: PPP-LINKED GAWU WINS OVERWHELMING VICTORY IN ELECTION
TO DECIDE UNION RECOGNITION IN SUGAR INDUSTRY

REF: GEORGETOWN 2014

1. THE GUYANA AGRICULTURAL AND GENERAL WORKER'S UNION (GAWU), DOMINATED BY CHEDDI JAGAN'S MOSCOW-LINE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP), HAS BEEN DECLARED THE UNOFFICIAL WINNER IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY'S DECEMBER 31 POLL TO DECIDE UNION RECOGNITION IN THAT KEY SECTOR.

2. THE VICTORY ITSELF CAME AS NO SURPRISE. ALTHOUGH ITS NAME REMAINED ON THE BALLOTS, GAWU'S RIVAL, THE INDEPENDENT, PRAGMATIC MAN-POWER CITIZEN'S ASSOCIATION (MPCA), LED BY TRADES UNION CONGRESS PRESIDENT RICHARD ISHMAEL, HAD ANNOUNCED SOME 36 HOURS BEFORE THE POLLS OPENED THAT IT WOULD BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS AFTER
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FAILING TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH GAWU AND THE MINISTER

OF LABOR ON CONDUCTING THE POLL. THE SURPRISE WAS IN THE SIZE OF GAWU'S VICTORY. THE UNCONFIRMED RESULTS GAVE JAGAN'S LABOR ORGANIZATION 21,583 VOTES, ALMOST 98 PERCENT OF THE MORE THAN 22,000 SECRET VOTES REPORTEDLY CAST. THE MPCA RECEIVED ONLY 376 VOTES, LESS THAN 2 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS WAS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT 26,000. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONFIRMED REPORTS OF ANY IRREGULARITIES.

3. THE GUYANA SUGAR PRODUCER'S ASSOCIATION (GSPA), REPRESENTING OANAGEMENT, IS SEEKING TO CONFIRM WHAT MANY CONSIDER TO BE A SURPRISEINGLY LARGE NUMBER FO VOTES FOR GAWU, WHICH ITSELF HAD PREVIOUSLY STATED THAT IT WOULD BE PLEASED WITH 85 PERCENT SUPPORT. IN SPITE OF ITS BOYCOTT, SOME OBSERVERS THOUGHT THAT THE MPCA WOULD STILL MAKE A FAIR SHOWING, (PERHAPS AS MUCH AS 20 PERCENT) AT LEAST AMONG THE INDUSTRY'S FACTORY WORKERS.

4. COMMENT: THE MPCA HAD ALREADY CONTESTED THE LEGAL VALIDITY OF THE POLL UNDER EXISTING LABOR CODES, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GAWU WILL NOW GAIN ITS DECADES-LONG GOAL OF OBTAINING OFFICIAL RECOGNITION AS SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF GUYANA'S SUGAR WORKERS. WHETHER THIS WILL LEAD TO A GREATER DISPLAY OF RESPONSIBILITY AND OBJECTIVITY ON THE PART OF GAWU AS A LABOR UNION, AS EXPECTED BY SOME LABOR LEADERS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. RECOGNITION OF GAWU, HOWEVER, WILL REMOVE A MAJOR SOURCE OF TENSION BETWEEN THE PPP-RUN UNION AND THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS. GAWU IS NOW EXPECTED TO SEEK AFFILIATION TO GUYANA'S TRADES UNION CONGRESS (TUC), REPLACING THE MPCA AS THE TUC'S PREDOMINANT MEMBER. THIS COULD, DURING THE COMING YEAR, SWING THE HITHERTO PRAGMATIC AND WESTERN-ORIENTED, ICFTU-AFFILIATED TUC TO THE MOSCOW-LINE POSITION OF THE PPP AND CONSEQUENTLY AFFILIATION TO THE WFTU.

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